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**Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives**
**First session**
New York, 17–28 May 1999
Items 3 and 4 of the provisional agenda*
**Preliminary review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development**

**Consideration of further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments made at the Summit**

# Contributions from relevant organs, funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system

## Note by the Secretariat

### Addendum

### Contribution from the World Food Programme

The Secretariat circulates herewith for the information of the Preparatory Committee the attached report of the World Food Programme, which is available in English only.

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## Annex

# Implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development: WFP's experience

The World Food Programme supports the commitments and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development by focusing its operations on the poorest and marginalized areas of the world. In 1998, **WFP provided help to some 74 million people**: people living outside the political and economic mainstreams; farmers in poor rural areas where most banks are reluctant to invest their capital; families without resources crowded in slums where jobs are scarce and living conditions degraded; women in search of medical care; refugees hoping for a return to their homeland; children looking for the education that would give them a better future; victims of floods, droughts or man-made conflicts: these are WFP's clientele who received a spark of hope and the vitally needed food which saved them from hunger and helped them along the path out of poverty.

**Commitment 1:**

*We commit ourselves to creating an economic, political social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development.*

*At the international level, we will:*

*i. Support particularly through technical and financial co-operation, the efforts of developing countries to achieve rapid, broad sustainable development. Particular consideration should be given to the special needs of small island and land-locked developing countries and the least developed countries.*

WFP food assistance is people-centred and targeted to the very poor. In 1998, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) accounted for **50** percent of operational expenditure for development. Low-income, food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) accounted for **87** percent of operational expenditure for development.

**Commitment 2:**

*We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international co-operation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.*

*At the international level, we will:*

*g. Strive to ensure that the international community and international organizations, particularly the multilateral financial institutions, assist developing countries and all countries in need of their efforts to achieve our overall goal of eradicating poverty and ensuring basic social protection;*

*i. Focus attention on and support the special needs of countries and regions in which there are substantial concentrations of people living in poverty, particularly South Asia, and which therefore face serious difficulties in achieving social and economic development.*

WFP helps build assets and promotes self-reliance of poor people. Food aid has been used to act as a safety net for vulnerable groups in both rural and urban areas in countries undergoing structural reform. In poor rural areas, food aid is used in food-for-work projects, especially during periods when hunger is most prevalent – the agricultural lean season. Food-for-work during the lean season not only creates short-term employment but it helps create rural assets such as roads, irrigation facilities, public amenities and equips the poor nutritionally to work in normal agricultural production activities.

**Commitment 4:**

*We commit ourselves to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.*

*At the international level, we will:*

*n. Further enhance international mechanisms for the provision of humanitarian and financial assistance to refugees and host countries and promote appropriate shared responsibility.*

*o. Promote international co-operation and partnership on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit.*

WFP's dual mandate of providing relief and development assistance places it in a key position to assist in tandem with partners, in the transition from crises to recovery. WFP continues to provide food aid to refugees in collaboration with other partners. In 1998, WFP spent US$ 950 million in emergency operations to assist refugees, internally displaced people and victims of natural disasters. US $254 million was spent on development projects including food-for-work and school feeding, and supplementary feeding projects. WFP has introduced new guidelines on Protracted Relief and Recovery

(PRRO) after presentation of a policy document on "From Crisis to Recovery" to the Executive Board in April 1998.

WFP's extensive experience in protracted or complex emergency situations has demonstrated that traditional relief responses - treating a crises as essentially an abnormal short-term event distinct from development - is often inadequate in addressing the real needs of people who are trying to stabilise and secure their livelihoods in a conflict situation. Development activities in support of a humanitarian effort can help prevent further deterioration in social and economic structures, establish foundations for recovery and reconciliation, and help to avert future conflict-related emergencies. These include:

- employment through food-for-work activities which directly benefit targeted populations and restore food security;
- support to restore production capacity and increase food production at the household level. Activities should be closely associated with reactivating positive coping mechanisms, income generation and restoring productive capacities by which households gain access to basic means of production;
- supplemental nutrition programmes;
- market support through local purchases, private sector involvement in food transport and delivery, social market outlets and community based activities such as small enterprises for both women and men;
- enabling people to participate in education and skill training;
- the maintenance of an emergency response capability to respond to set-backs;
- the implementation of disaster-mitigation activities to reduce the impact of natural disasters during periods of conflict.

**Commitment 5:**

*We commit ourselves to promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality between and equity between women and men, and to recognising and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development.*

*At the international level, we will*

*k. Promote and protect women's rights and encourage the ratification of ... the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and other relevant instruments, as well as the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women, and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;*

*i. Give specific attention to the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in September 1995, and to the implementation and follow-up of the conclusions of that Conference.*

WFP's **Commitment to Women**, articulated at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, will continue to be implemented. WFP's Commitments to Women include:

- food distributed to households, ensuring that women control the family entitlement, in 80 percent of WFP-handled and subcontracted operations;
- 60 percent of country programme resources targeted to women and girls in those countries where gender statistics demonstrate a 25 percentage point disadvantage for women as compared with men;
- 50 percent of education resources within a country programme targeted to girls;
- at least 25 percent of project outputs/assets created through food for work to be of direct benefit to and controlled by women.

These commitments ensure that women not only have a role as beneficiaries of WFP assistance and receive their fair share of assets created, but they must also participate in decision-making about the use of WFP resources. WFP experience has demonstrated that placing food or giving direct assistance to women has multiple benefits for household nutrition and food security, particularly for young children.

**Commitment 6:**

*We commit ourselves to promoting and attaining goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, highest achievable standard of physical and mental health, and the access of all to primary health care ... to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration.*

WFP development operations have a strong focus on human resource development. When household food security is an obstacle, food aid is effective in:

- reducing the opportunity cost of sending children, especially girls to school;
- ensuring that, once there, short-term hunger does not inhibit their capacity to learn;
- freeing women's time so that they may learn new skills, acquire basic education or gain access to other development activities.

WFP food aid has helped improve **school attendance** through school feeding programmes. WFP continues to place particular emphasis on measures which enable the attendance of girls, especially in geographic areas which show both food insecurity and low overall rates of elementary school attendance or low attendance of girls. This will not mean the exclusion of boys, but rather careful attention to girls' access to schooling. In Malawi, Morocco, Pakistan and Yemen, WFP projects provided a ration of food (for example, a can of oil in Pakistan) to the family when the daughter has attended school.

School feeding projects improve the nutrition and health of children and increase their physical energy and alertness. Children who arrive at school without eating, often after a long walk, do not derive the maximum benefit from their presence in school. Their short-term hunger inhibits concentration and learning. WFP's experience in many countries confirms that something to eat early in the school day enables these children to learn better.

Where hunger prevents the poor from developing special skills and receiving training for self-reliance, WFP intervenes with food aid to remove this constraint. With food assistance, vulnerable groups in rural communities, especially poor women, can afford the time required to make use of literacy skills and training programmes to enhance their lives. In India, for example, a WFP project helps to end the vicious cycle of poverty and low self-esteem among a group of tribal women in Jhabua district. Using simple technology, the women are managing the entire production and marketing of infant food for supplementary feeding programmes.

**Commitment 7:**

*We commit ourselves to accelerating the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries.*

Over the past two years, about half of WFP's assistance has gone to people in Africa. WFP's aid to Africa in 1998 amounted to US$ 634 million, equivalent to approximately 53 percent of its world-wide assistance. 1998 was a particularly difficult year - because of natural disasters and civil strife, relief requirements continued to be high, accounting for more than four-fifths of WFP operational expenditure in the region. The support for development efforts was equally divided between food-for-work for rural infrastructure and for human resource development, covering primary school feeding programmes and health and nutrition interventions (MCH).

Roughly 40 percent of the food distributed to Africa is procured in Africa, either in surplus producing countries or in surplus producing regions of the recipient country in question. For overland transport of food, WFP is to a large extent relying on Africa's private transport sector, and well over 50 percent of its expenditure on food and transport of food is spent in Africa. This constitutes a considerable support to African economies.

**Commitment 8:**

*We commit ourselves to ensuring that when structural programmes are agreed to they include social development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and enhancing social integration.*

Whilst structural adjustment is expected to bring long-term growth and stimulate socio-economic development, vulnerable groups such as women, children, and those poorer groups who inhabit marginal rural areas or urban unplanned settlements often need food assistance during such transitions.

During structural adjustment, the removal of subsidies and liberalisation of markets are to improve incentives for agricultural producers through higher producer prices and long-term growth. However, in the short-term, the poorest groups in rural areas who are food-deficit and the poorest in urban areas who devote a large part of their income on food are negatively affected by increases in food prices or loss of public sector employment. In such situations, food aid has been used to alleviate short-term hunger through targeted food-for-work and supplementary feeding programmes.

**Commitment 9:**

*We commit ourselves to increasing significantly and/or utilizing more efficiently the resources allocated to social development in order to achieve the goals of the Summit through national action and regional and international co-operation.*

*At the international level, we will:*
*j. Facilitate the flow to developing countries of international finance, technology and human skill in order to realize the objective of providing new and additional resources that are both adequate and predictable;*

*m. Increase the flow of international resources to meet the needs of countries facing problems relating to refugees and displaced persons.*

WFP continues to give top priority to those countries that are least developed and food insecure. 53 percent of operational expenditure to Sub-Saharan Africa in 1998 was used to assist refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of civil strife and natural disasters. WFP continued wide-scale assistance to 1.4 million victims of conflict in the **Great Lakes** region (Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for the fourth consecutive year. Rehabilitation plans for 1.7 million refugees, returnees and displaced people in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana were also curtailed by resumption conflict in Sierra Leone.

In 1998, WFP provided a total of 164 million dollars of emergency assistance to 19 million flood victims in **Bangladesh** and 5.8 million flood victims in **China**. Relief activities have become an increasing proportion of WFP assistance in the **Latin America and Caribbean Region**, rising from 2 percent of operational expenditure in 1996 to 18 percent in 1998. The presence of on-going development projects enabled WFP to respond swiftly to the disasters caused by "El nino" and Hurricane Mitch in Central America.

**Commitment 10:**

*We commit ourselves to an improved and strengthened framework for international, regional and sub-regional co-operation for social development, in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.*

WFP will continue its collaboration and co-operation with sister agencies of the UN system and civil society in support of development efforts and relief activities.

WFP's Change Management Initiative has delegated authority and decentralised decision-making to the WFP Country Offices. This initiative strengthens WFP participation at the country level in the UN Country Team, and enhances inter-agency co-operation. This process also strengthens the role of the Resident Co-ordinator as the leader of the Country Team.

WFP has actively participated in formulation, assessment and evolution of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the use of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) guidelines which has emerged as part of the UN reform process.